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St. Andrew's Society of Ottawa.

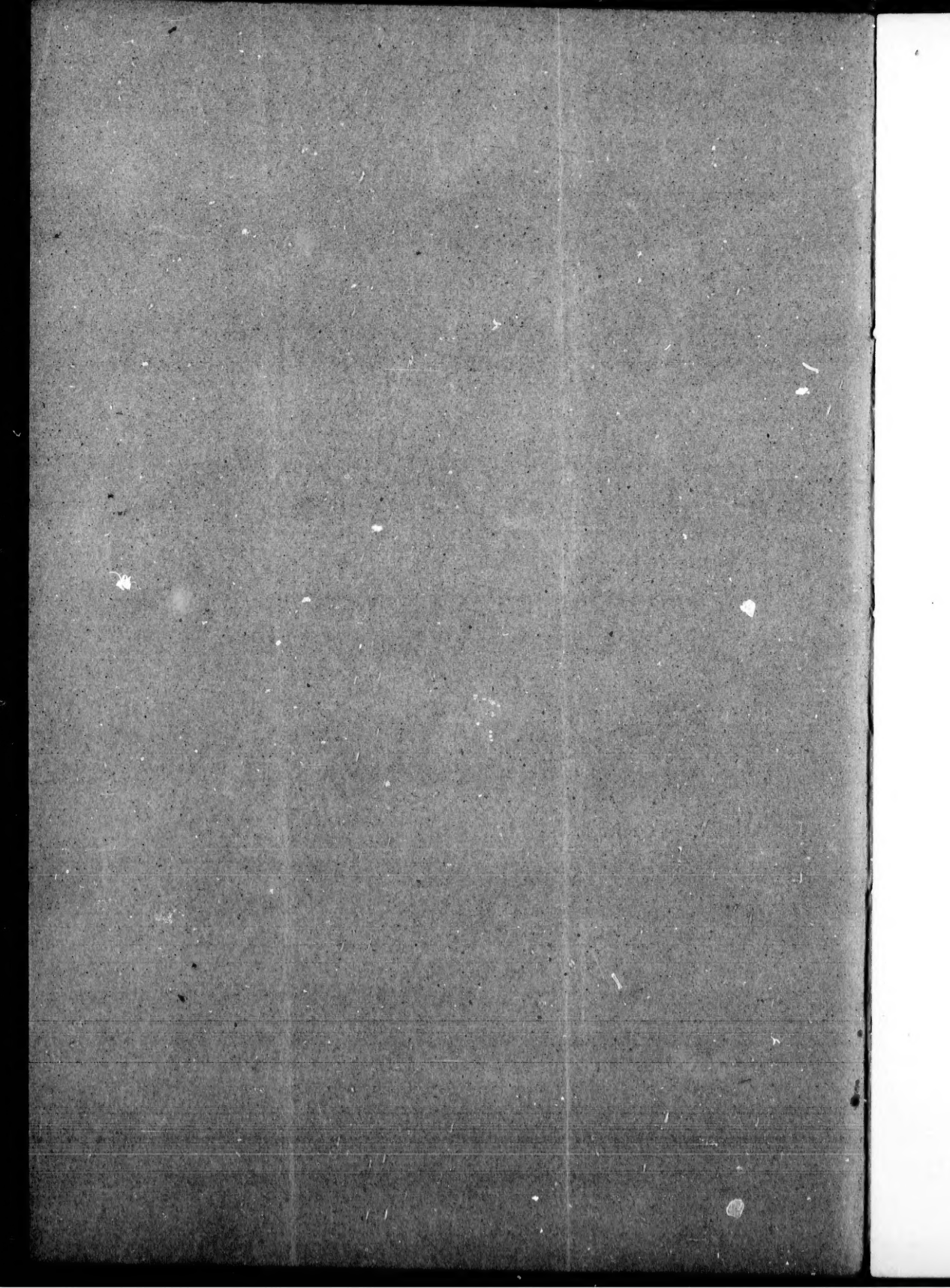
ANNIVERSARY SERMON

Preached in Knox Church November 30th, 1890;

—BY THE—

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CHAPLAIN OF THE SOCIETY.



SCOTTISH CHARACTERISTICS.

"Their Origin and Practical Worth."

"And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."—I. Chron. xii., 32.

THESE words occur in the midst of the account which we have, in this chapter, of the gathering of the tribes of Israel to David to make him king. And when we read them in the light of that wonderful and spontaneous movement, it becomes very evident that these tribes possessed characteristics which distinguished them, not only from all other peoples and nations, but which distinguished them from one another. And God who, in their creation and by His providence, makes men to differ, never ignores their distinguishing characteristics. And so when telling us of the gathering of the tribes to David, he not only records the names of the different tribes, but fixes indelibly upon the page of inspiration the features and qualities by which one tribe was distinguished from another. Each tribe possessed something more than a name, something more than the number of the individuals who rallied around its standard, and occupied so much territory in the country. The tribes were not like so many bullets run in the same mould, and placed in different boxes, their only distinction being that they occupied different places. They possessed a tribal character, features and qualities which marked them off and distinguished them from one another. And the Holy Spirit is as careful to mark the distinctive characteristics of the tribes as he is to record their names and their numbers. Thus he tells us that the Benjaminites were ambidexterous, "they could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones, and shooting arrows out of the bow"; that the Gadites were "men of war, fit for the battle, who could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains"; that the children of Simeon were "mighty men of valour for the war"; that the children of Ephraim, for their heroic deeds of daring and prowess, "were famous throughout the house of their fathers"; and that the children of Issachar were "men

that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." As we look through this inspired description of the gathering of the tribes to David, we see them as clearly distinguished from one another as ever were Highland clans by plaid and plume, or regiments in a review by their uniform and colours. And what the pen of inspiration here does for the tribes of Israel, peoples and nations have done for themselves. They have shown that they possess not only different names, and occupy different portions of the world, but that they possess different characteristics. And they have inscribed their distinguishing features upon the annals of time. And this fact, which requires neither proof nor illustration, is very clearly exhibited in the history and lives of the Scottish people. For no nation has produced a more salient and clear cut type of character than Scotland. It stands out in clear and bold relief like her own rugged mountain peaks against the sky.

And assembled, as we are this evening, for our anniversary service, as a St. Andrew's Society, one of whose aims is to perpetuate the memory of our dear native land, and to gather the lessons which its history teaches, it will be quite in harmony with this aim, to consider for a little : *First*—The characteristics of the Scottish people ; *Secondly*—The origin of these characteristics, or how they have been acquired ; and *Thirdly*—Their practical worth.

I am deeply conscious that to deal satisfactorily with any one of these topics would require a volume rather than a sermon, and hence I can only notice them in the most summary manner.

And I am sure that in considering the characteristics of the Scottish people, upon an occasion like the present, it is scarcely necessary for me to observe, that there is no desire or intention to ignore or depreciate the many and honorable characteristics of any other people or nation. For while we may dwell with a pardonable admiration upon many of the characteristics of the sons and daughters of Scotland, we trust, that we are neither blind to their faults and failings, nor to the merits and noble qualities of the people of other lands. But just as the inspired chronicler seized upon the best qualities of each tribe and recorded them where they shine in the eyes of men of all ages, so may we seize upon the best features of a people and hold them up for admiration and imitation, and to say that the children of Issachar were "men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do," was no reflection upon the archers of Benjamin, or the swordsmen of Gad or the martial prowess and daring of Ephraim.

First, then, with regard to the characteristics of the Scottish people,

we notice, that they are physically large and vigorous; Scottish soldiers, we are told, are, on the average, the tallest in the world, and, perhaps, this is true of the people as a whole, and along with their stature they possess stalwart frames and great powers of endurance. They are a people noted for their carefulness and frugality. Satirists and envious, hostile critics call them a grasping, avaricious, miserly people, whose controlling motive is to get and to keep. They tell us with a sneer, that Scotchmen "keep the Sabbath and everything else they can lay their hands on;" and that "farthings were coined to enable Scotchmen to contribute to religious and charitable objects." And whilst we do not deny that some Scotchmen are both mean and miserly, yet in the light of all the generous gifts, and noble sacrifices, and unselfish, heroic deeds, that mark the conduct of Scotchmen, both in the past and present, we can afford to smile at such baseless and scornful charges. The Scottish people are frugal, economical, saving, but they are not avaricious and miserly. There are some dark spots, however, even on the sun. They are an industrious and persevering people, not easily discouraged or baffled in their undertakings. In the prosecution of their designs failure is seldom accepted as defeat. It serves rather as a spur to greater effort. They are a brave and courageous people. We have but to glance at the history of the long and terrible struggles and conflicts through which they passed in their native land, and at the record of their heroic achievements abroad, to be convinced of their daring courage and dauntless bravery. For in their long and bloody conflict for civil and religious liberty at home, and in making common cause against the oppressor of Europe, and despotism every where, the sons of Scotland have stood in many a deadly breach, and gathered on many a hard-fought field the prize of unquestioned gallantry—"and what is still greater praise—have never sullied victory with licentiousness." The Scotch are distinguished also for their patriotism. Their love for the home of their childhood and the land of their nativity is a passion. Neither danger nor distance can quench its ardour. They are also a people of vigorous minds and poetic genius with an intense love of knowledge. No country, in proportion to its population, has produced a greater number of eminent scholars and illustrious statesmen, or such a brilliant galaxy of poets. Their love of liberty and hatred of tyranny and oppression have flashed their light upon the world for ages. "The foot of slave her heather never trod." From the time her hardy sons rolled back the forces of the conquering Roman from the rocky fastnesses in the north—"from regions Caesar

never knew," through long centuries of war and persecution, Scotland resisted, in council and on the field, the persistent efforts of tyranny and despotism to enslave her, and ceased not the strife until she had won the prize of freedom for which she fought. But it is in her moral and religious qualities that her crown of excellency is found. In these lie the secret of her strength. They constitute her highest glory. Her people are distinguished for their truthfulness, their faithfulness, their honesty, their high and sensitive honour; they have a sacred regard for the institutions of religion, and an unswerving faith in the truth and absolute authority of the word of God. Their loyalty to Christ, as the only King and Head of the church, has been witnessed by their struggles and battles, their sufferings and martyrdoms. They have an invincible faith in God as the absolute Sovereign who rules in righteousness and who through all the strifes of the ages is working out the counsels of his own will. It is these qualities that gem the character of Scotland as with stars. Her chief riches are her faith. Her battle cry on many a field, was "For Christ's crown and covenant." She adores and glories in the crown rights of Christ, and in the riches of that sovereign grace which, without earthly priest or prelate, grants to every needy, seeking soul liberty of access into the Holiest of all. To secure liberty for the word of God, liberty for all her sons and daughters to read and hear that word—and to maintain the absolute right of Christ to rule his own church, through the officers which the church herself should choose, much of her costliest treasure was sacrificed, and much of her richest blood was shed. For these were more than life to her.

Such are some of the distinguishing characteristics of the Scottish people. And in presenting this summary I have the suspicion that some enthusiastic Scot may think that the enumeration is quite incomplete, that there are many shining qualities in the Scottish character that have not been so much as named: for I have an impression that some of my countrymen, without wishing to see excellencies where there are only mediocrities, or to find virtues where there are none, possess an almost ineradicable belief that, give a Scotchman oatmeal, and in his character every virtue that has a name will bloom and flourish. I cannot, however, hope to satisfy such. My conscience will not permit me. And, therefore, whilst admitting that the enumeration of characteristics now given is only partial and incomplete, yet, I think, it is sufficiently full and accurate to give us a somewhat definite conception of the Scottish character.

And, now, in the *Second* place, let us notice the origin of these

characteristics, or the causes that produced them. To the questions of God's word, "Who made thee to differ"? and "What hast thou that thou didst not receive"? there is but one answer: God made us what we are and gives us all we possess. But in making us what we are, and giving us what we possess, God works through means and instrumentalities and events to mould the nature which he gives, and to form the character which we possess. God made the block of marble, but the angel that slumbers in it is brought out by the successive strokes of the hammer wielded by the hand of the sculptor whose genius he inspired. So God gives our nature, endowed with different qualities, but the character which that nature possesses is brought out and developed by the circumstances and events with which God surrounds and effects our lives. Nations and individuals are what God makes them in their creation and through his providential dealings with them. And in a history so full and marked by moulding events as that of Scotland, we may trace, with a great measure of clearness and accuracy, the varied and complicated means and agencies which God has employed in forming the distinguishing characteristics of her people. For while it is true that the origin of the Scottish people, like the sources of the Nile for centuries, is veiled in a mystery that has not yet been penetrated, yet it is admitted by all historians that when they emerge into the clear light of history, they are the product of the commingling of varied races. Several sturdy and adventurous peoples who found a foothold and a home in Scotland, have contributed to give her sons the stalwart frames and physical prowess and endurance which characterize them. Her people are a tree whose wide-spreading roots have gathered strength from many races. Then the sterile nature of the country tended to foster that persevering industry and frugality which mark the Scottish people: for Scotland has been rather a hard and stern mother to her children. Not like other lands whose rich soil and tropical suns and varied natural products have given, almost spontaneously, an abundance of food and clothing to their children, Scotland, with her bare moors, and craggy hills, has granted but little to her sons that they did not wring from her soil by hard and persistent labour. And thus her sterility and sternness contributed to develop their physical strength, and all those virtues of diligence, perseverance, hardihood and frugality which are fostered and moulded by toil. But while with a niggard hand she has contributed through her soil to the sustenance of her children, she has by her varied scenery of beauty, of grandeur and sublimity aroused the thought and inspired the genius that shine with such brilliancy

through her varied literature, and which glow with such intensity in the poetry and songs of her people. Her quiet, cultivated vales, her swelling uplands, her bold and elaborate outline of forests, her rocky fastnesses and feudal towers, her inhospitable moors, her solitary lakes, her sepulchral cairns, her frowning rocks, bursting like famished skeletons from their scanty covering of vegetation, here patched with heath or sprinkled with firs, and there scarred by storms, and scathed by lightnings, and riven by earthquakes, and trembling with the impetuous rush of her torrents, and resounding with the thunder of her cataracts, present such a variety of scenery as to stir the thought and please the fancy and suit the varying mood of every heart. And that her scenery has had much to do with quickening the minds and kindling the genius of her people is manifest from the fact that "from the natural fastnesses of the north, to the Tweed and the Solway, not a river, fortress, lake, or valley but has had its historian, and not a mountain, it may be literally affirmed, lifts its head unsung." "O, Caledonia! stern and wild," thou hast proved thyself a "meet nurse for the poetic child." Then her long struggle for civil liberty deepened within the breasts of her sons their passion for freedom and developed their spirit of sturdy independence. Their thirst for knowledge was fostered by the various seats of learning that were established in the very dawn of her history, and multiplied as the centuries rolled on until, through her parochial schools, she placed the gate of knowledge near to every home and made it accessible to every child in the land. But mighty as these forces were to mould the character of the Scottish people, it was her religious principles, her reverence for God, her submission to the authority of His word, her unswerving loyalty to Christ, her faith, tried and purified by the fierce fires of persecution that nerved with greatest strength and crowned with noblest virtues the Scottish character. Speaking of the terrible and long-continued struggle through which Scotland won her civil and religious freedom, Dr. Hanna recently said in a sermon, "The dawning light of the Reformation had to encounter in Scotland and pierce the gloom of a darkness that might be felt. The heralds of the truth had to seal their testimony with their blood. The first martyr to the Reformation—Patrick Hamilton—perished at the stake; but the flames of a persecuting hierarchy cruelly kindled to consume the youthful witness for God and truth shed a light over Scotland that ecclesiastical tyranny could not quench. Men everywhere enquired why Hamilton was put to death, and the enquiry brought the conviction that Hamilton was right, and that his persecutors were stained with the guilt of

murder ; and the voice of John Knox, proclaiming scriptural truth, resounded over the land like a thunder peal. It smote the superstitions of the age as with the stroke of lightning. It rent the bonds of spiritual thralldom, and Scotland stood erect, a nation rejoicing as the freemen of the Lord, in the enjoyment of a larger liberty than any other nation on the earth. And in a later age, when a despotic sovereign sought to restrict religious liberty in Scotland the nation declined submission to the yoke, and 28,900 martyrs died to maintain the crown rights of the Redeemer and the religious freedom of the land. There have been no nobler contendings for the truth * * * * * and to that great conflict maintained in Scotland against arbitrary power, is due, more than to any other event the constitutional rights of the British people, and the greatness and glory of the British Empire." The convictions that were strong enough and permanent enough to lead men to enter such a struggle and maintain it, penetrated their very hearts' core, brought their life and all they had under control, and moulded a character rich in every manly virtue and radiant with every christian grace—and the principles for which they contended in the field, and were outcasts upon the mountains and suffered at the stake, were those that moulded the home life of the people. There the fear of God, reverence for his name and laws and ordinances, with all the virtues and graces of which their faith in Christ was the root, were diligently inculcated. Homes like that described in the "Cottar's Saturday night," and there are tens of thousands of them in Scotland, made the truths of the Reformation, the truths for which fathers and mothers and friends suffered and died, living, practical realities, verities to fill the heart and govern the life. And her homes, out of which sprang the social state and natural life with all its virtues and amenities, give to Scotland her high position and lofty character for patriotism and piety, for honesty and faithfulness.

" From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
Which makes her loved at home revered abroad."

Such then are some of the things which have moulded the character of the Scottish people. The external appearance of this character may be, and often is stern and rugged, with an air of gloom about it, like the mists on their native hills. But that form has been wrought out through rough and bitter experiences. There are the seams and scars of many a conflict in which all was ventured—the marks of the furnace upon it. But these experiences, descending, like "freedom's battle form bleeding sire to son," have wrought these characteristics so deeply and fixed

them so indelibly that neither time nor change can efface them. You may filter this character through Ulster, and after centuries its features are uneffaced. For no branch of the Presbyterian Church in all the world to-day, adheres more closely to the great principles of the Reformation, or that maintains in greater purity and faithfulness the doctrines and government of their covenanting forefathers, than the Presbyterian Church of Ireland. You may pass this character through generations of Colonial or American life, and, though it may be modified, it is not obliterated. There is a presistence in this character which asserts itself through generations of foreign residence and which reveals the Scot no matter how long he may wander or how far he may roam.

But now notice, in the third place, the practical value of these characteristics. As our time is more than exhausted, I can only bid you estimate their worth by the respect with which Scotchmen are regarded and the honourable positions they have attained, the wide world around. I cannot speak of the work they have accomplished, of the triumphs they have achieved, of the laurels they have won in every department of learning and literature, science and art, of business and commerce. Their character has been a passport to the confidence and trust of men in all lands and of all ranks. It has made them patient, diligent, faithful in all positions and departments of labour and of trust. It has made them cautious and safe and wise counsellors and statesmen, premiers and presidents. It has made them dauntless and daring, "walls in the trenches, and whirlwinds on the plains," when Britian's rights or honour was assailed. It has placed them in the van of the hosts of liberty, and in the front rank of the great army of progress.

"Thy spirit, Scotland, let me share,
 Lord of the lion-heart and eagle eye !
 Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,
 Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky,
 Enough thy glow to feel, thy name to bear."

Sons of Scotland ; seek to possess this character. Be honest, truthful, be diligent and frugal, honour God, exalt and enthrone in your hearts the Saviour, Christ, for whose glory your fathers suffered and died, so shall you perpetuate the honourable name of your fatherland, possess the elements that ensure success, and do something to assuage the woes and brighten the joys of humanity, and with the true and faithful of all lands help to hasten the time when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

